

*To be Every where Spoken against, At first
The Case of the Christians Themselves, and
now of the Protestant Dissenters.* 79

Considered in Two
SERMONS

Preach'd at
BLACK FRYERS,

March the 9th and 16th, 1712.

On ACTS XXVIII. 22.

*For as concerning this Sect, we know that
it is every where spoken against.*

WHEREIN

The Duty of the Dissenters in such a Circum-
stance is laid down; and something hinted
with Reference to the Act against Occasional
Conformity.

By S. WRIGHT.

The Second Edition.

L O N D O N,

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SERIALS

BLACK PANTHERS

March 1968
Vol. 1, No. 1
The Black Panther Party
for Self-Defense
and Liberation
is a revolutionary
organization
dedicated to
the liberation
of the black
people from
the oppression
of white
supremacy
and the
exploitation
of the black
people by
the capitalist
system.
The Black
Panther Party
is a part of
the Black
Liberation
Movement
and is
dedicated to
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S E R M O N I.

ACTS xxviii. 22. latter part.

—For as concerning this Sect, we know that it is every where spoken against.

AMongst the many famous and graceful Passages in the Conduct and Behaviour of the Great Apostle *PAUL*; this, to which our Text refers us, is none of the least.

HE is now, as a Prisoner, advancing towards *Rome*; the *Brethren* in the *Faith* for which he had so earnestly contended, go out to meet him: Eager to see and converse with a Person of whom they had heard so many Great, and Good Things: Some went as far as *Appii-Forum*, about Fifty Miles; others as far as the *Three-Taverns*, about Thirty Miles from the City: This Kindness and Respect our Apostle first receives with all Thankfulness to God, and then improves as a Support and Encouragement to Himself; and thus He came to *Rome*. Upon his Arrival the *Centurion* delivers up his Charge of Prisoners to the Captain of the Guard: And as, at his first taking *Paul* into Custody, he had been charged by *Felix* to allow him his Liberty; so he became much more a Friend to Him upon the Good Opinion he had justly conceived of Him in their Journey; and could not but be particularly sensible how much He owed to the *Apostle* in the late *Shipwreck*, in which He and his Company had been so wonderfully delivered; and therefore obtains for him that special Favour to dwell by himself, with a Souldier appointed to keep Him.

THIS Liberty St. *Paul* well knew how to make use of, both to the Advantage of himself and his Cause: Tho' we do not find he was so much concerned for his own Security, as he was to propagate Christianity; for which, he elsewhere tells us, He was willing not only to be bound, but to die.

HE loses no time in setting about what was fit to be done: but after three Days, which very likely might be spent in consulting with his God, his Friends; and his own Spirit; He calls together the *Chief* of the *Jews* which Resided in that City: And now, like one perfectly acquainted with all the Arts of wise Management; but at the same time under the immediate Direction

and Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we find him opening his Case, and the Reasons of his being brought into such a Circumstance. If any Address in the World could have gain'd upon so fullen, and bigotted a People, methinks that very just and affecting Account he gives of Himself, should have melted them into the most favourable Thoughts imaginable: And should have made 'em look upon that very Chain as an Ornament, which he tells 'em he was bound with, for a strenuous and faithful Adhering to what had all along been the Expectation of their Fathers, and what, to that day, was the common prevailing Hope of Israel; namely, *the coming of the Messiah, and the Resurrection of the Dead.*

HOW Noble and Excellent is the Spirit? How moving the Eloquence that shines in those Four Verses, 17, 18, 19, 20. *Me and Brethren, tho' I have committed nothing against the People or Customs of our Fathers, yet was I delivered Prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.* And that you may not think I give a false Account of my self, in assuring you that I suffer without Cause, I desire no further Favour at your Hands, that that my Judges, before whom I was tryed, may witness for me *who when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of Death in me.* Should you further ask how Matters then come to be carried thus high, in still proceeding against me? The plain State of the Case is this; The Jews were so far from falling in with the declared Opinion of my Judges, that they were the more hated and incensed by it; so that, in meer Self Preservation, *I was constrained to appeal unto Cæsar.* Hereupon he immediately adds according to the Temper of true Christianity, *Not that I had ought to accuse my Nation of.* After all these Provocations, and this Barbarous Treatment, I am yet ready to forgive, and to do all the Service and Good I can to my Nation and People: So that you have nothing to fear or suspect from me, as if I should now plead my Own Cause before the Emperor to Your Detriment: For, to give you full Proof that I have no such Ill-will towards you; I have, thus presently upon my Arrival, called for you, to see you, and to speak with you, that I might assure you, It is not with any Design to reflect upon the Jews, that I am come hither, but to assert and maintain the Great things that are commonly expected, and hoped for, by them. *For the Hope of Israel I am bound with this Chain.* And here, methinks, if the Generous way of asserting his Innocence could not make them his Friends, the happy manner of showing and pleading his Chain must do it. Yes, for the Present they give into what He had said, *We neither receive*

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Letters out of Judea concerning thee, neither any of the Brethren that came shewed, or spake any harm of Thee. And more than this, they seem'd dispos'd to hear his Thoughts in the Matters of Christianity too : But whilst some became Converts, it should seem, that others became Enemies ; And so it prov'd amongst them, as they reported it was in all other Places, *That as concerning this Sect, it was every where spoken against.*

SUCH is the Power of Prejudice, and of differing Sentiments in Matters of Religion, that tho' Christianity it self was the Cause in Dispute ; tho' so great and Accomplish'd a Person as the Apostle Paul was the Advocate, and He too inspir'd by the Holy Ghost ; yet the Generality were rather Provok'd, than Perswaded by Him. How much more must this be the Case, where Matters more intricate are Debated ; and Persons in every respect less able to manage them are concerned in them. However, let the Run of the World be never so violent against those that are truly Good, we have here a most Encouraging Example to look to : One that did not think it a *Dishonour*, nor did He think it *in vain* to stand up for those, who were every where spoken against ; nor was he afraid to profess himself One of them ; nor did he at last decline to suffer Martyrdom on this Account. So that from hence we may very fairly take Occasion to consider these Three things,

- I. THAT true Religion, and the Professors of it, may be every where spoken against.
- II. THAT this may happen even amongst such as pretend to the same Religion, as well as amongst those who profess to be of the most different Religions in the World.
- III. WHAT is the Duty of such as are truly Pious, and Conscientious in such a Case.

I. THESE Words do most plainly suggest *this* to us, that *True Religion*, and the *Professors of it*, may be *every where spoken against*. The History of our LORD, and of his APOSTLES, does abundantly prove thus much, That never any Man spake, or wrought Miracles, liv'd, or dy'd, as JESUS CHRIST did ; nor did ever such a Spirit of Power, of Wisdom, of Holiness, of Goodness, appear in the World, as that which fill'd and guided his *first Disciples* ; and yet the same History informs us of the continual Reproaches, and Slanders, the hard Usage and Persecutions which they every where met with.

As for our Blessed SAVIOUR, you know He was commonly Reproach'd with this mean Extract, and Condition.

"A spiteful malicious *Proverb* concerning the *Country* where He "was brought up, was what the *Jews* laid as great weight upon " (says an Excellent Writer) as if that alone was enough to con- "fute all his Miracles : When once they had shot that Bolt at "him, *Can any good thing come out of Nazareth*, the Business was "concluded clear against him." But adding to this their Ex- ceptions against his seemingly mean and poor Circumstances in the World, this they found a yet more taking Reason for Re- jecting Him ; since a present Kingdom and Temporal Greatness was what their Hearts All run out after. The Miracles of CHRIST they ascrib'd to the Devil. And in his Conversation they reflected on Him as a Friend and Familiar of Publicans and Sinners. Tho' at the same time they saw that his Miracles were wrought to dispossess the Devil, and to destroy his Works ; and that He conversed with Sinners no other way but in order to the making them Saints, and bringing them to Repentance : But such notorious Inconsistencies and Contradictions do Men spread, and take up with, when they once set themselves to vilify Goodness, and Good Men. Once more, it was no small Contempt that they thought to throw upon our LORD, by putting the Quest- ion, *Have any of the Rulers or Pharisees believed on him ?* Hereby setting all the Power and Authority both of Church and State, the Learned and the Rich against CHRIST, and his Followers, whom they reviled as Ignorant and Illiterate, Vile and Accursed.

NOW, as the Master of the House met with such Treatment, so shall we find it was afterward with Them of his Household. Tho' indeed the Preaching of the APOSTLES was strangely suc- cessful as to some, yet it was as strangely opposed by others. It was usual to call 'em Distracted Persons ; sometimes they were mock'd and despised as Men full of Wine, Acts 2. 13. sometimes they were charged with being mad, and beside themselves, Acts 26. 24. sometimes Men were so provok'd by their Preaching, that they immediately laid violent Hands on them, and imprison'd them ; and in Courts of Judicature severely threatned them, and command- ed them not to teach in the Name of Jesus, Acts 4. 2, 3, 18. The Pharisees, who were violently set upon their Ceremonies, and furiously zealous for the Honour of their Church, thought they could never breathe out Torcatnings and Slaughter fast enough against the Disciples of the Lord ; as the Account is given of Saul, Acts 9. 1. who lived after the strictest Sect of the Publick Religion, a Pharisee Acts 26. 5. and who acted particularly under their Direction. The Sadduces, on the other hand, who were become meer Sensualists, and had thrown off all Inward Religion, deny- ing that there was either Angel or Spirit, or that there should be

any Resurrection from the Dead ; but yet for some Political Reasons complying with the Establish'd Worship, and outwardly professing a Regard to the Law of Moses ; these Sadduces, I say, had no Patience to hear the Doctrine of the APOSTLES, Acts 5. 17. Then the High Priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the Sect of the Sadduces) and were filled with Indignation, and laid their Hands on the Apostles, and put them in the Common Prison.

AT one Place they are brought before the Magistrates, and commanded to be beaten, ch. 5. 40. At another Place they were endangered by the Clamours and Riots of the common People, who rose against 'em, and assaulted the House where they were, Acts 17. 5. The Jews which believed not took unto them certain lewd Fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a Company, and set all the City on an Uproar : and assaulted the House of Jason, and sought to bring them (Paul and Silas) out unto the People. And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain Brethren unto the Rulers of the City, saying, These that have turn'd the World upside down, are come hither also. And thus we find Tertullus, a mercenary Pleader for the High Priest and Elders, forging an Accusation against Paul, wherein he represents him as an Enemy to Church and State ; a Mover of Sedition, and a Profaner of the Temple, Acts 24. 5, 6. These, it seems, have always been the Topicks with which Men of ill Principles have sought to run down others. And when St. Paul had clear'd himself with a Plainness of Speech, that pour'd the utmost Contempt upon the barbarous Eloquence of his Accuser, directly replying to the Charge, *They neither found me in the Temple disputing with any Man, neither raising up the People, neither in the Synagogues, nor in the City, neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me* ; when, I say, the Apostle had thus stop'd their Prosecution of him in a Legal way, the next thing we hear of, is their laying wait for him secretly to murder him, Acts 25. 3. The Athenians and such as were famous for their Wit and Politeness, derided the Plainness and Simplicity of the Christians. The Philosophers and Men of Learning reproach'd 'em, for maintaining and teaching what they counted Absurdities. The Rich and Great despised them, because of their Poverty and Meanness. And hence it was that the Generality of the People, who are govern'd and determined by those of Figure and of Common Fame, scorn'd and abused them. To be brief, The Apostle Paul himself has accounted for all this, when he tells us, that the Preaching of CHRIST CRUCIFY'D was to the Jews a Stumbling-block, and to the Greeks Foolishness. You may easily observe in our Apostle's Catalogue of his Sufferings,

2 Cor. 11. 23. *and the following Verses*, what Entertainment he and the Gospel he preached, met with, not only in *Judaea*, but in other Parts of the World: A Summary of which we have in *Acts 20. 23.* where he says, *The Holy Ghost witnesseth in every City, that Bonds and Afflictions wait for me.* So true is it that sincere Piety, and the Professors of it, may be every where, and in the most violent manner spoken against.

II. I am next to shew, That *this may happen* even amongst such as pretend to the same Religion, as well as amongst those who profess the most different Religions in the World.

THE first Enmity and Hatred that shew'd it self after the Fall of Man was upon a Religious Account, and that, when there was but one Religion, yea but one Family upon Earth: I mean in the Matter of *Cain and Abel*. They were both taught to worship God, and to sacrifice to him by their Father *Adam*; tho' it seems with very different Success; for the Lord had respect unto *Abel*, and his Offering, but unto *Cain* and his Offering he had no respect: And upon this very Account, without any other Provocation that we read of, *Cain's* Hatred of his Brother swell'd to such a Degree, that he rose up against him, and slew him, *Gen. 4.* begin.

SO amongst the *Jews*, to whom in a peculiar manner were committed the Oracles of God, yet we find their Contests very great, and many dreadful Quarrels breaking out amongst them. There were a Number, you know, who withstood *Moses* and *Aaron*, even at a time when God did in the most signal and miraculous manner Choose and Own them. And in times of Corruption, and the spreading of Immorality and Prophaneness, those who maintain'd a prevailing Sense of Religion were hated and distress'd. So *Elijah* was pursued by *Ahab*, as one that troubled *Israel*, and threatened by *Jezebel*, only for his faithful adhering to the Law of God, and the first Institutions of his Worship. *Jeremy* complains, *For thy sake I have suffered Rebuke*, *Jer. 15. 15.* Read *ch. 20. 1, 2.* and you will find that his Sufferings were occasion'd not by the *Heathen*, but by the very Priests of his own Nation: Now *Pashur* the Son of *Immer* the Priest, who was also Chief Governour in the House of the Lord, heard that *Jeremiah* prophesied these Things, when *Pashur* smote *Jeremiah*, and put him in the Stocks that were in the high Gate of *Benjamin*. And so again the Prophet *Amos* tells us, That Uprightness and sincere Piety was what provoked the greatest Hatred and Enmity in his time, *Amos 5. 10.* They hate him who rebuketh in the Gate, and they abhor him who speaketh uprightly. A Jew or not a Jew, yet if he was a good Man, he was abhor'd.

abhor'd. It is sufficiently known how fatal their Divisions and Heart-burnings against one another were, when that of our Saviour was fulfill'd, *That the Son should rise against the Father, and the Father against the Son, &c. and a Man's Foes should be they of his own Household.*

But now if we look into the *Christian World*, the Divisions, Contentions and Persecutions which have prevail'd here have been also very Numerous and very Great. And that not only where the Religion is manifestly different, as betwixt *Papists* and *Protestants* it is; which, tho' they both bear the Name of *Christians*, yet are certainly most opposite to one another: But even amongst *Protestants* Themselves, who are of the same Religion, has there been the same spiteful and reproachful Speaking against one or other Party of them. I say of the *same Religion*; for it is an Artifice of the Devil and of Designing Men, to put it into Peoples Heads, that a Difference in some External Modes of Worship makes different Religions; but give me leave to repeat it even amongst *Protestants Themselves*, that is, Those who profess to take the Bible for the only Rule of their Faith and Worship, who subscribe the same Articles, agree in the same Ordinances and Institutions, and who press the very same Duties of practical Godliness and Religion, yet has it so happened, that some have been every where spoken against by others. We have too many sad Proofs of this in the History of our own Nation, and the Temper of our own Times, to need farther Enlargement. And indeed these things are fitter to be Read and Talk'd of elsewhere, than to be publish'd in such a Place as this.

It will be more to your Advantage, and therefore, I doubt not, will be more acceptable, to enquire into the Reason of its being so, than to trouble you with the ungrateful Rehearsal of what has been from time to time of this kind. And as it will much more tend to compose our Minds, and to make us acquiesce in such a State of Things, to Account for it, than to produce Instances of the Truth of it; this is what I shall attempt in the remaining Part of this Discourse, by considering these following Particulars.

I. THE chief End and Design of Men may be as opposite and contradictory, where they profess the same, as where they profess different Religions; and if we may at any time suppose that the prevailing Party are governed by a wrong End, then those who are pursuing the best and greatest End, may be every where spoken against.

To explain my self, The Enjoyment of *This World*, or the obtaining of Everlasting Happiness in the Next, is what all Men

are set upon; and as one or t'other of these prevail, Men are said to be *Earthly* or *Heavenly-minded*; and the main Course of their Lives and Actions is accordingly directed and over-rul'd. Temporal Power and Grandeur, Wealth and Riches, sensual Delights and Entertainments are made the *chief Good* of the one; whilst the Kingdom of Heaven, the Beatific Vision and Fruition of God, with all the Intellectual Joys and Satisfaction which result from thence, are accounted the *chief Good* of the other. Now what can be the Consequence of such a widely different manner of thinking and acting, as this most contrary Turn of Mind must lead Men into, but a continual thwarting and opposing one another? And forasmuch as the Sensualist is least able to govern his Passions, so we always find him the most eager and violent in his Pursuits, and most chaf'd and impatient under Contradiction or Disappointment: So that, let a Man who is aiming at a Spiritual, *Intellectual Happiness* despise and throw Contempt upon all the Pomp and Pleasures of the World, he must certainly draw upon him either the Envy, or Scorn, or Hatred and Malignity of the *Sensual Man*. And thus in truth it is with the thoroughly Religious Person, *he counts all things but Dress and Dung, for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus*. Nor does he only give the World disgracing Epithets and hard Words, calling it *vain*, and *miserable*, and *vexatious*, and the like; but, by a constant Course of Actions endeavours to shine with so *different* a Lustre, as to cast a *real Shade* (suffer the Expression) upon All the Worldling admires.

CONSIDER a little these two Persons; on one hand, there is a Man, who is mighty eager in the Pursuit of *Shadows*, he will needs set 'em up, and magnify them as the greatest and only *Prizes*: and if any go about to perswade him of his *Mistake*, and tell him that he is following *meer Vanities* and Trifles, he presently concludes that such are *weak* and *Foolish*, and only to be look'd upon with a *contemptuous Smile*; or else he concludes, that they *envy* him, and have really a *Design* against his *Happiness*, and so he counts them his *Enemies*. On the other hand, here is a Man, who from a deep and powerful Conviction of the Excellency of his *Soul*, the Certainty of a *Future State*, and the Reality of *Invisible Things*, thinks it his Duty to maintain his Principles, and his Expectations, in Contempt of all the profane Wit and Gayety of his Opposers: and that he ought firmly to stand it out, both against the ensnaring Sollicitations, and the severest Threatnings and Displeasure, of the Man of the World. Now how can it be otherwise, than that *these two*, whenever they reside together, should be at *continual Variance*? And may it not

be thus, where Men outwardly pretend to the *same Religion*, as well as where they maintain a *profess'd Difference*? Does the Name of a Christian always signify, that a Person is concern'd, above all things, to save his Soul? You know it is quite otherwise in *Fact*; and in the *Reason* of the Thing nothing more easy to prove, than that a Man may comply with all the *Externals* of Religion, who has yet never known what it is to have his Heart thus turned from *sensible* to *spiritual* Objects. A Man may undoubtedly, and many do, most certainly, take up a Form of Godliness and cry up this and the other Church or Party, only to serve a *Present Interest*, and with a Heart wholly Intent upon some *Temporal Good*.

INDEED many there are who set up for Great Things *here*, and at the same time look for very Great Things *hereafter*; who have found out a way to reconcile, in their own Apprehensions, those Eternal Irreconcilables in Scripture-Language, the *Love of God*, and the *Love of the World*. The Artifice of these Persons lies here, in never *meddling* with Religion farther than is consistent with their *worldly Interests*; and yet promising themselves as great a Share in the Favour of Almighty God at last, as if they had *left all* for his Sake. A Prudence this, if we may use their Word for it, inspired, without Question, by the Great Enemy, and Destroyer of Souls.

OTHERS again think to cover their Worldliness and Sensuality by loud Clamours for something they would have to *pass for Religion*; and if once a *Temporal End* can be served thereby, these Mens Hatred rises highest against Them who are of a more Heavenly, Spiritual Disposition. The Gross of Mankind are glad to meet with any thing contested for under the Name of Religion, which may suit their depraved and worldly Inclinations. *Natural Conscience*, we'll suppose, suggesting to them the Inconsistency of this and the other Course of Life with the Hope of Salvation; whilst yet they are resolved not to *quit* either their *Sins* or their *Hopes*; though they are forc'd upon every sober Reflection, to own their *Contradiction*. Now if, in this Distress, any shall rise up, and *surprize* them with such Notions of Christianity, as seem to License, or at least Excuse their sinful Ways, these are the *main Champions* of Religion; and those who do not think as *they* do must presently be condemn'd and vilified. Nay, 'tis possible that not only Others, but even These very Advocates themselves, may think they are pleading for the *true Religion*, when, in reality, they are only pleading for such a Religion as is consistent with a Sensual Corrupt Mind. Search to the bottom, and we shall generally find that the *Spring* of those Contentions, which are about Religion, is no other than this, a prevailing Re-

gard to some *Temporal Interest* on one side, and a prevailing Concern about a *Future and Eternal State* on the other. I'll only add under this Head, that whoever considers duly the Difference betwixt those whom the *World* Canonizes for *Saints*, and those whom *God* pronounces such, will see Reason to own, that the Enmity betwixt These must in some Respects be greater, and more Im- placable, than that which is betwixt an Infidel and a true Believer.

(2.) THE *Ways and Manners of Men* may be as *contrary* and *various* where they profess the *same*, as where they profess *different Religions*. And it is but supposing, oh ! that it was only a Supposition, that the major Part are at any time vicious and corrupt ; and then the Men of Regular Behaviour and Conversation will be *every where* spoken against. So David tells us, he was the *Song of the Drunkards* ; and the *Derision* of great and Proud Men, because he *declined not from God's Law*, Psal. 119. 51. Indeed Practical Godliness is that which a Libertine is least able to bear with in those about him. Hereby his Sins are set continually before his Eyes ; and as he is resolved not to part with them, he grows enraged against his Neighbour, whose Life is a standing Reproof and Reproach to him. Holiness gives a Person such a substantial Greatness, and shews him to the World in so recommending a manner, that such as will not imitate, do yet secretly admire, or however envy, the Character of the real Christian.

Now if at any time Conscience is awaken'd without working Mens Conversion, it does certainly excite in them the greatest Indignation. In such a Case a Man thinks it absolutely necessary to sink the Credit of that Conduct and Behaviour, which is so much the Reverse of his own, in order to secure a good Opinion of himself. Hence it is that if the Good Man is guilty of any *real Fault*, the Bad will be sure to magnify it, and as far as possible to make him appear *such a one as himself* ; nay so much worse as he will from thence charge him with *Hypocrisy* in all his Pretensions to a greater Strictness and Holiness than himself. Again if he cannot find, he will endeavour to *forge* Sin upon him. Or if he has no Opportunity for this, he will even hate and quarrel with him for Goodness it self. The Apostle Peter, describing the voluptuous and riotous part of Mankind in his Day, tells us they *spoke Evil* of those that were *sober*, only on this account because they would not join with them in their Debaucheries and Excesses, 1 Pet. 4. 3, 4. *Who walked in Lasciviousness, Lust, Excess of Wine, Revellings, Banquetings, and abominable Idolatries ; wherein, says he, they think it strange, that you run not with them to the same Excess of Riot, speaking Evil of you*

Happy

Happy they who for *this* Reason are *every where* spoken against.

BUT yet farther, as this Corruption of Manners and prevailing of Vice becomes bold and open, and rises to any high Degree, it puts Men upon seeking and contriving the very *Destruction* of those that live *Righteously, Soberly, and Godly* in the World. An immoral and vicious Man concludes first, that every Serious Person is an *Enemy to him*, and thereupon he is sure to make himself an *Enemy to such*. Thus concerning those that profess the same Religion, it is said, *Psal. 37. 12. The Wicked plotteth against the Just, and gnasheth upon him with his Teeth*: an Expression that denotes the utmost Rage and Hatred. And a little after, in the same *Psalms* it is added, *The Wicked watcheth the Righteous, and seeketh to slay him*. This Difference of Mens *Ways* and their *Manners* has always been the Foundation of the greatest Quarrels and Animosities that have risen in the World: Nor have we any Reason to expect it should be otherwise, whatever Religion Men make an outward and visible Profession of: Witness that of *Solomon, Prov. 29. 27. An unjust Man is an Abomination to the Just: and he that is upright in the Way is Abomination to the Wicked*.

3. THE *Tempers and Constitutions* of Men may be as *cross and contradictory* to one another, where they pretend to the *same Religion*, as if never so different. So that if a *haughty arrogant Temper*, or a *spiteful malicious* one be most spreading and predominant; those that are of a *Humble and Meek, a Charitable and Friendly Disposition*, will every where be opposed and spoken against. *Christianity*, indeed, where it is rightly understood and entertain'd, will soften the hardest, and sweeten the sowrest, and calm the roughest Dispositions in the World. There is enough to make Men *Tender and Compassionate, Kind and Forgiving, Patient and Long-suffering, full of Love and of Good Works*: but alas! how seldom do we find Persons so much under the Power of it, as to produce such Effects?

Even many of those, concerning whom we have good Reason to Believe and Hope the *best*, (after all that the Grace of God has done upon their Souls) do yet retain so much of their Natural Ill *Tempers and Dispositions*, as to give a great deal of Trouble and Uneasiness to all about them. You cannot but be sensible, that a many Contentions in Good Families, and sometimes in Religious Societies, have been owing to Some disgusting and disagreeable *Tempers*, where there have been no different Opinions or Sentiments in Matters of Religion. There are many whom a Good Person may hope to meet in Heaven, and to be *happy with* there, (when all that was amiss both in his own

Temper

Temper and Theirs shall be taken away) that yet he would not choose to *spend a Life* with upon *Earth*. *Paul* and *Barnabas* may go so far in their Contentions, as to separate one from the other in their *Work here*, who yet undoubtedly shall reap the *same glorious Reward* together for ever.

BUT now if this may be the Case, where both are truly Good; only put the Matter so, as that one side shall be really Bad, and wholly under the Conduct of Humour and Constitution, and then what dreadful Broils and Quarrels may we not conclude will arise from the Resentments and Ill Tempers of such? Mens being of the same Religion signifies little here, when even Religion it self is the Subject upon which these contradictory Tempers are most violent; and from which they will fetch in fresh Succours to Cherish and Reinforce themselves. O, were it possible *Mens Tempers* should be healed, how soon would all those things, which are most peevishly and furiously contended for, be dropt of Course? But till then it must needs be that Divisions and Offences will come; and the several Ill Humours of Men, till they are subdu'd, will find out one thing or other whereby to disturb the Common Peace. Let Men be United by *Oaths* and *Subscriptions*; let both their *Civil* and *Religious Interests* be bound together; yet will a *furiously unpeaceable Spirit* find out ways to exert it self in Reviling, and trampling upon those who are at quiet in the Land.

(4.) THE Two Invisible contending Powers have their several Agents and Instruments amongst those of the same Religion, as well as when Christians were opposed by Jews and Heathens. The Spirit of Grace, as the Great Minister of Christ's Kingdom, is continually promoting and carrying on his Designs of Renewing and Saving Men. The Prince of Wickedness, on the other hand, is daily going about, seeking whom he may devour; endeavouring to supplant and to hinder the Efficacy and Success of those Methods which the Holy Ghost proceeds upon. The first grand Agents in the Cause of Christ, this Holy Spirit selected, and qualified for his Service, in an extraordinary manner; and the Wicked Spirit on all Hands was as active and vigilant to raise against 'em extraordinary Opposition. He stirr'd up Princes and Rulers to Persecute 'em; Philosophers and the fam'd Genius's of the Age to Dispute with them, and Deride them; he enabled some to work Miracles, at least in Appearance, to counter-work those wrought by the Apostles.

BUT the manner of Contention soon alter'd: The Evil Spirit finding Christianity triumph'd over all Adverse Powers, and that it was in vain for his most skilful or potent Instruments to do

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any thing, whereby to hinder the *Progress* of it; his next grand Attempt was to *counterfeit* it; and by allowing Men to *call* themselves *Christians*, to hinder their becoming *really* such. Thus has he set up a Temporal Kingdom and Empire at *Rome*, in Opposition to the *Spiritual Kingdom*, and Government of our Lord Jesus Christ: and thus does he every where endeavour to mingle a *worldly Spirit* with that of the *Gospel*, and to make a *showy Religion* take place of real Sanctity and Goodness. Now in Opposition to this, the *Good Spirit* is still going on with his Work, by *Converting* and *Sanctifying* a Number in every Age to be *Witnesses* for God and Christ in the World; and to plead the Cause of *True Piety*, in Opposition to all *False Pretensions*, as well as *False Religions*. Hence it is that some are persuaded, *Except their Righteousness exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees*, the boasting formal Professors, *they cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*. And others still value themselves upon outward *Privileges* and *Distinctions*, cherishing in their own Minds and endeavouring to give all about 'em, very *mean*, yea very *hard* Thoughts of such as think it necessary to go farther than They. Now consider Men thus differently impress'd and wrought upon, as acting under the Direction and by the Assistance of such Invisible Powers; and who can expect otherwise, than that those who are led Captive by the God of this World, should be every where speaking against those, who in the *Apostle's* Phrase are led by the Spirit.

I should now proceed to the *Third General Head*; but, having already exceeded my time, I shall defer that to the next Opportunity. Only suffer me in the Close of this Discourse to take Notice of *Two Things* that may be objected against what we have been attempting to prove.

THE first is, That such Doctrine seems no way agreeable to the extensive Grace and Mercy of the Gospel; to suggest that in Places where the Gospel is generally received, and where Men profess to embrace the Truths and the Institutions of it, that yet the more numerous and considerable Party should be in a State of Enmity to God and Goodness, and so under Condemnation. In answer to which I desire that such Texts as these may be seriously attended to, *Matth. 20. 16.* Our Lord expressly tells us, that *Many be Called, but few Chosen*; that is, *Many* hear the Gospel, and so far receive it as to become *Members* of the *visible Church*; but *Few* live and walk according to it, so as to be indeed separated at last to *Eternal Life*. Another Passage is that of the *Apostle*, who speaking of the profess'd Christians in his Day; wherein their Numbers were comparatively but very *small*; yet says, that *many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, they are*

are Enemies of the Cross of Christ, whose End is Destruction, whose God is their Belly, whose Glory is in their Shame, who mind Earthly Things, Phil. 3. 18, 19.

THE second Objection that may lie against the Thread of the foregoing Discourse is this, That it seems very strange God should suffer his Faithful Servants, though never so few, to be hardly treated, and every where spoken against in the World. This you will meet with very frequent and full Answers to, in almost every Treatise of Providence, or of a Future Judgment. It shall suffice at present to put you upon considering, How much this tends to the Glory of God, and Christ, and the Blessed Spirit: How amazingly is Infinite Wisdom, and Power, and Grace manifested in carrying a Poor Creature through so Great and Constant Opposition; and thereby making perfect all the Heirs of Salvation. And then again, how much this tends to the Glory of the Saints; in subduing their Corruptions, in brightning and encreasing their Graces, and rendring them more conspicuous to the World*. And withal how much this adds to the Felicity and Joys of Heaven; both as to Those who are There already, and Those who from time to time are joined to that blissful Company. If there be Joy in Heaven at the Conversion of a Sinner, much more sure at the Conquest of a Saint: If upon putting on his Spiritual Armour, and engaging in the Christian Warfare, there are such joyful Acclamations; how much more when the Good Fight of Faith is finished, and the Crown of Glory is set upon the Victor's Head. And an unspeakable Pleasure it must surely be to the Soul, that is once got safe to the Regions above, to look back upon the many Dangers and Difficulties it has escaped, and surmounted here below: But above all, to find the Recompence so vastly exceed not only its greatest Toils and Sufferings, but even its highest Thoughts and Imaginations. Then shall that of the Apostle appear in its full Sense and Meaning; 2 Cor. 4. 17. *Our light Affliction which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.*

Which God grant may be the Happiness of us all.

* Temptation is the greatest Occasioner of a Christian's Honour: Indeed like an Enemy it threatens and endeavours his Ruin; but in the Conquest of it consists his Crown and Triumph. Were it possible to be at League or Truce with this Enemy, like the Candle in the Gospel, that is put under a Bushel, the brightest part of our Glory were quite obscured. As Maximus Tyrius spake of Hercules, If you take from him the Savage Beasts that he slew, and the Tyrants whom he suppressed, his Journeys and Labours, you spoil all Hercules's Renown: so take from a Christian his Temptations, his Persecutions, his Contentions; remove him from the Devil, from the World, you deprive him of the Chief Matter and Subject of his Glory. Take Job from the Dunghill; David from Saul; Daniel from the Lions; the blessed Martyrs from the Rack, from the Fire, from the Sword, and what are they more than other Men? Hales of Eaton on 1 Sam. 24. 5.

SERMON

S E R M O N II.

ACTS xxviii. 22. latter part.

—For as concerning this Sect, we know that it is every where spoken against.

THESE Words do so exactly represent the Case of the Protestant Dissenters at this Day, that one can hardly read 'em without making such an Application of them. But if you review the foregoing Discourse, it will lead us primarily to apply this to the truly Serious and Religious of All Parties, and not to confine it to any One Party amongst us. And so indeed it is most true in our Degenerate Age, That *Real Goodness and Piety is every where spoken against.*

LET a Man be in Communion with the *Establish'd Church*, or with any of those who *Dissent* from it; yet if he would maintain a prevailing Sense of Religion, and if he lives an outwardly Regular and Sober Life, he is sure to be hated and reviled for it: Let him be never so strict a *Church-man*, he is presently called a *Presbyterian*; and hereby the poor unthinking, vicious part of the World imagine they have loaded him with Reproach enough.

A *Presbyterian* is thus become a Name much more to be glory'd in, as it has been made use of to include all who are eminent for Practical Godliness, than as it has serv'd to distinguish a Party; tho' I see no Reason as yet to be ashamed of it even in that sense. However, take it one way or t'other, 'tis still the Case with reference to us, that, *As concerning this Sect, it is every where spoken against.* I shall therefore consider in the following Discourse how we ought to *behave our selves* in such a Circumstance as this.

AS far as we are reviled and spoken against for the Sake of *Real Piety*, it is certainly our Duty to resolve with *David*, that, *if this be to be vile, we will be more vile*: And in whatsoever manner we are spoken against in the Matters of *Non-conformity*, only let us take Care that it be for the Sake of a *good Conscience*; and then even in this respect also we may strengthen and encourage our selves.

MANY of those very things in which we *Dissent* from the *Episcopal Churches* (whatever may be thought of 'em now) were look'd

look'd upon by our *Fathers* as great and considerable enough to be contended about, not only to the *Loss of Places*, as you know Two Thousand of our Ministers were ejected at once; but even to the *spoiling of their Goods*, the suffering of *Fines* and *Imprisonments*, and many of 'em the *Loss of All Things*. A Scripture-Religion and Way of Worship is as much to be stood up for as ever: And as far as any Man upon a close and diligent Search of the Scriptures does believe that this, or the other, way is most agreeable thereto, he ought to adhere to it: And to be allow'd so to do; for I think it is, in the general, an agreed Point amongst *Protestants*, That no Man has a Right to *Impose* his Sense of the *Bible* upon another, any more than to *Impose* a *New Bible* and Scripture it self upon him. In Effect, the one is pretty much the same with the other. I shall not enter into the *Controversy* here; those who want to be informed in it may consult, at their Leisure, those many *Excellent Pieces* that have been written on this Subject. I only stand oblig'd at this time to keep my Eye upon, and Improve this *One* thing which the *Text* suggests, and which we have so much Reason to take to our selves, viz. a *being every where spoken against*. This is what I have propos'd as the last General Head.

III. TO shew what is the *Duty of Those that are truly Pious and Conscientious in such a Case*. Certainly they should not think the worse either of themselves, or their Cause, on this Account; much less Resign themselves as a Conquest to Noise and Confidence. It is not now by a Calm and Sober debating the Articles upon which we differ that we are to be wrought upon; the Generality have neither Skill nor Patience to go that way to work; but by loud and bitter *Invectives* and *Declamations*, yea, I wish I had not Reason to add, by the most notorious *Falseness* and *Misrepresentations*, every where exasperating Mens Spirits, and exciting them to *Strife* and *Hatred*.

WHAT shall I say? If this had been a sufficient Reason for Mens giving up their Principles, and slackening their Resolutions; we had never heard of such a *Choice* as that of *Moses*; who chose to suffer Affliction with the People of God, rather than to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a Season: esteeming the Reproach of Christ greater Riches than the Treasures in Egypt. We had never heard of such a *Resolve* as that of *Joshua*; As for me and my House we will serve the Lord. In short, if the common Cry had been enough to bear down Truth and Conscience, the Christian Religion it self must have been crush'd and stifled in its Infancy: And

all Attempts towards a Reformation from Popery, Superstition and Corruption in later Ages, had effectually been baffled and prevented; and there would never have been such a thing as Singular Piety in the World. Noah and Lot, and Abraham and Elijah, and the rest of the Prophets under the Old Testament; with the First Disciples of Christ under the New, and the many Martyrs and Confessors we read of, had never shone so brightly, had they not stood to their Principles, in spite of the greatest Numbers of Opposers.

NOW then, let every Man set down this as the main Rule of his Proceeding, *Hein do I exercise my self, to have always a Conscience void of Offence toward God, and toward Men, Acts 24. 16.* And then, I think, the Conduct of the Great Apostle Paul in the Context, and of those other Saints in Scripture we have mentioned, will be a sufficient Direction to us how we ought to demean our selves in all Cases, and at all Times wherein we may be thus exposed. I shall comprize what I have to offer upon this Head under these Four Particulars.

(1.) IT certainly concerns Men when they are thus spoken against, to get well acquainted with the Cause for which they are Reviled. For a Man to bid Defiance to all Obloquy and Scorn, in espousing a Matter which he is able to give no sufficient Account of, is to render not only Himself contemptible, but his Cause too. If upon any Assault he pretends to defend Himself, he betrays an Ignorance and Weakness that adds to the Calumny and Contempt he labour'd under before: If upon being attack'd he refuses, or is not able, to assign a Reason for his Profession, he then falls under the Censure of Obstinacy, as having resolved to take this or the other way, without ever examining into the Grounds of his doing so. The World, you know, is always inclin'd to fall foul upon those who seem singular, in Pretending to what they are not able to Support; so that whenever any Man is likely to be set upon for his being of such a Party as is every where spoken against, it should be his particular Concern to get furnish'd with a Knowledge of all that is necessary to maintain his Ground.

THERE is indeed a great deal of Difference betwixt a being able to represent a matter so as to convince another, and so as to justify one's self: That may be a very good Reason for my own Conduct and Resolutions, which yet may not be sufficient to gain over another Person to the same Opinion. It is indeed greatly desirable, that, where Evidence and Truth lie most, Persons were able to communicate their Thoughts with that Clearness and Strength as to win upon others; but as this is a

Happiness few attain to, it is not, I think, in the general, so much to be aimed at. And in Cases where Men have not only Reason, but Power and Authority, Interests, and Preferments, a conceited or a violent Spirit, with such like, I had almost said, Invincibles, to argue against, it is Vanity to expect any Regard or Success: However, I should not content my self in Matters of Religion, without *such* Reasons for what I do and profess, as may *satisfie my self*, though I cannot thereby make any *Alteration* in the Sentiments and Opinions of *others*. Thus to pay a due Respect to our own Convictions, and to act faithfully according to our own Sense of things, will prove that we are *sincere* and *conscientious*, though we should be thought by some not so *wise* and *judicious* as themselves.

TO speak plainly, I wish it might never once be said, that any Man is a *Dissenter* through Ignorance and Weakness, or from a Spirit of *Enthusiasm*; nor that we stick close to our Principles upon the *Prejudices* of *Education* meerly, or from a self-will'd *obstinate Temper*; but by gaining such a Knowledge of the Scriptures, as by these to try the *Spirits* of the several Parties, and examine the *Order* and Discipline of the several Churches: and then, testifying that prevailing Regard to the Conclusions we think our selves oblig'd to draw; as that *They* may be asham'd, who have given the World such *false* and *contemprible* Accounts of us.

I know there are some of the most Considerable Members of the *Church of England* that have shewn themselves Friendly toward us; and that have with great Calmness and Judgment considered what has been writ and offered on our Behalf: But the Concessions which have been made by such, and the Steps which have been taken to gain the *Dissenters*, are now cry'd out against, as contrary to the Sense of the *Church*, and they who have come into them are revil'd as *Betrayers* of it: so that both *they* and we are now *every where* spoken against; and those with whom we have most to do at present are such as carry Matters a quite different way.

BUT to return to what I was upon, When any thing of Consequence and Importance in Religion becomes a matter of *Dispute* and Men are called out in a *Publick* manner to bear Witness *for* or *against* it; certainly 'tis then a Duty, and what common Prudence and Wisdom should put us upon, seriously to *examine* and *consider* the *Point in Debate*. I might also add, that it is the Duty of those who are the *prevailing* Party, as well as of those who are *spoken against*, to inquire into these Things. It was a constant Observation amongst the Christians for the first three hundred

hundred Years, I think till the time of *Theodosius*, That whenever any Clamours and Tumults arose, *illam esse veram Ecclesiam quæ Persecutionem patitur, non quæ facit*; That was the True Church which suffer'd Persecution, not That which raised it. And indeed the Sufferings of Those in *Theodosius's* time, was not owing to any Difference either in Doctrine or Worship, but for the most shameful and tumultuous *Riots* and *Mutinies**. So that according to that Observation it should rather incline one to think favourably of those who are *every where spoken against*, than of those who raise such Clamours and Reproaches. However that be, 'tis certainly no sufficient Reason to conclude, that Men are in the *wrong*, or that they are *really* contemptible, because *common Fame* will have it so. For then *Christianity* it self had been effectually run down; and some of the *bravest Stands* which have been made against Immorality, Superstition, and Usurpations, must have been prevented and discourag'd.

IT is the Unhappiness of the *Dissenters* at this Day to be very much *unknown*; and therefore the grossest and wildest Suggestions are continually *publish'd* by *some*, and easily *believ'd* and credited by *others*: but had I an Opportunity of speaking to such as are thus carry'd away with *common Reports*, and from thence *judge* of us; I would recommend to 'em that Passage of *Tertullian*, when in a like Circumstance he is *Apologizing* for the Christians. *Natura Famae omnibus nota est, &c.* ‡ "The Nature of Fame is known to all, One of your own Authors says, *Fama malum, quo non aliud velocius ullum: Fame is an Evil, the swiftest of Evils*; but why, says he, is it called an Evil? Because it flies so swift, because it is an Informer? or rather because it is a noted Liar? This is intended, no doubt; since it never proves the Carrier even of Truth it self, but 'tis spoil'd with the Mixtures of Falsehood; lessening or greatning, or some way or other altering and varying to and fro in its Account of things. It is only supported by Lyes; and lives no longer than till it is obliged to prove things. Proof destroys its very Being: since Fame only reports, and never carries Evidence along with it.—— Report, as he goes on, is a very doubtful uncertain thing; and therefore no wise or considerate Person will lay much Stress upon it. Let things be never so prevailing and diffusive, let 'em be never so strenuously and boldly asserted, a thinking Man will inquire into the Principle

* Vide *Theodor. Ep. Cyr. Hist Eccl. lib. 5.* ‡ *Tertull. Apol. Sect. 7.*

"and Rise of them : as considering how many Ears and how many Months they may have gone through, both which may have injur'd 'em by mistaking or misrepresenting ; and so what was very inconsiderable at first is enlarged and obscured at last by various Rumours ; hence it is that Men care not to trace it, or to find out the first Author of the Falseness." And thus representing a general Rumour as false and lying ; he tells us, "It so happens, that Men raise and spread Lyes, either from an ill Temper of Hatred and Strife, or from a Liberty they take of saying any thing upon meer Jealousy and Suspicion : or, which is no new thing, from a natural Turn of Mind, that makes some People take a Pleasure in Lying." As far as this is thought worthy of Regard, it will argue that not only *these*, who are *every where* spoken against, but *others* also are concerned to inquire into those Things, which are become the Occasion of such Popular Contempt and Reproach. But,

2. IT is the Duty of such as are *thus* spoken against, not to be ashamed of their Profession on that Account. St. Paul was far from being ashamed either of his Cause or the Chain with which it had bound him ; when he suffer'd as a Christian. Besides what we have taken Notice of, in the Verses before our Text ; there are a great many other Places, in which he speaks as one that gloried in Reproaches, and Mockings, in Stripes and Afflictions for the Sake of Christ and the Gospel. That Narrative of his Conversion, which we have in Acts 26. shews that he was not ashamed even before Kings, and in the most August Court of Judicature to acknowledge himself one of those that were every where spoken against. So great and so handsome is his Close of all, that instead of being under Disgrace, he appears the most amiable and excellent Person of all that pompous Assembly. Only conceive of him as addressing himself to King Agrippa, who had told him he was almost persuaded to be a Christian, and then entertain a mean Thought of him if you can : I would to God, that not only thou, but even all that hear me this Day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these Bonds.

AND as He thus behav'd himself, so he admonishes others not to be ashamed of their Believing in Christ ; and particularly he joins it upon Timothy, Be not thou therefore ashamed of the Testimony of our Lord, nor of me his Prisoner.

I am very sensible there is a wide Difference betwixt our Case, and that of the Apostles and first Christians, but yet so far as any may apprehend they are pleading the Cause of Christ and Primitive

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tive Christianity, so far they may and ought to look to such Examples and Encouragements as these. 'Tis true, that, since *Kings* have Gloried in the Christian Name, and whole *Kingdoms* have profess'd the Christian Religion, it ceases to be any more, in such Places, an Occasion of Suffering to be called a Christian; tho' alas to be really such is as hateful to a worldly Spirit as ever. Firmly to adhere to the Christian Doctrines, and seriously to comply with all the Christian Institutions and Commands, is what still exposes Persons to the *Ill Usage*, or the *Ill Language* of the Wicked and Profane. 'Tis also gratefully acknowledged we are not now exposed to Bonds or Imprisonment for the sake of a good Conscience; but our Soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of them that are at Ease; and with the Contempt of the Proud, Psal. 123. 4.

I N some Respects it is more needful to fortify the Mind against the Workings of *Shame* than of *Fear*, because Persons are many times known to be much more affected with the Apprehensions of Disgrace, than of Death it self; and therefore have run the Hazard of losing their Lives to preserve themselves from imaginary Contempt.

I N D E E D such is the present State of Religion in general, that whatever Names Men call themselves by, yet true Piety is every where attack'd by harsh Censures, cruel Mockings, Jest and Ridicule, or a supercilious Scorn and Disdain; which, considering the several Tempers and Dispositions of Men that are hereby liable to be impress'd and wrought on, must be allowed to be very great Trials and Exercises. One Man's Spirit is sunk by the Anathema's, and confident Assertions of the Censorious; Another blushes to Confusion under the Taunts and Feers of the Ludicrous; and a third presently concludes himself to be influenced by some very little and mean Sentiments of things, because of the haughty disdainful Looks of the Scornful: 'Tis evident to the most ordinary Observer, that Practical Religion has been more run down by such Methods as these, than by the most dreadful Persecutions that ever have been in the World; and therefore that Man that holds with Conscience, and bears up to his Duty in Opposition to all this, may assure himself of a Conqueror's Reward, as well as He that has suffered Martyrdom for Christ's sake.

T H E R E is a very Culpable and Criminal Shyness in some young Persons that puts 'em upon dissembling, and seeking to conceal every thing that is serious and good in them; and they so carry it, at least in some Companies, and at some times, as if they had rather be thought to have no Religion at all, than have it once suspected

suspected that they are *so much* under the Power and Influence of a good Conscience, as in *reality they are* : but surely if the Matter was duly considered, such Persons would be *ashamed* of their *Shame*, and of their acting at *so very cowardly* and unbecoming a rate.

IT should methinks raise a Man's Spirit above all the Impressions of Shame, to consider what *sort of Persons* they generally are, who speak most *scoffingly* and *contemptibly* of us : They are such perhaps as you hear in the very same Breath *Blaspheme* the Name of God, whilst they are *Reviling* and deriding you : and can the Reproaches of *such* be accounted any matter of *Shame* ? Or shall you not be much more concerned for the Honour of God, than for your own Honour ?

NAY think again what is the truest and most *desirable Honour* : For a Man to be well spoken of by a few vain, frolicksom, unthinking Creatures ; or to be respected by the *wisest* and best of Beings ; to have the *Testimony* of a good Conscience, and at last to stand *approv'd* of God, and be *Applauded* by the Judge of all the Earth, when he shall come in the *Glory of his Father*, and with the *Holy Angels* ; and when all the World shall be *Witnesses* of his Proceedings ? Which of these do you think is the most real and desirable Honour ? Your *Faith*, if you truly believe these things, will soon determine you ; and a lively *Hope* of 'em will keep you from being ashamed.

GIVE me leave here also to put you in mind that your *Covenant Resignation* and Dedication of your selves to God leaves you no room to make *Exceptions*. As far as the *real Interest* of your Souls is concerned, you have promised to endure *Scorns* and *Reproaches* as well as other *Afflictions* in your walking with God. We should not therefore be ashamed of a conscientious Regard to such *Vows* and *Obligations*, however we may be *spoken against*. Yea,

3. WE should look upon it as our *Duty* to stand up for those who are thus *Revil'd*, and *Sufferers* for Conscience sake. Thus Saint Paul undertakes to vindicate that Sect that was *every where spoken against*. A Day being appointed he grudges no Pains, but from Morning till Evening He was perswading the *Jews* concerning *Jesus*, both out of the *Law of Moses*, and 'out of the *Prophets* : Verse following the Text. Thus Onesiphorus is commended to the *Mercy of God*, as one that did not shun or fly from the *Apostle*, but *diligently sought for him*, and Refreshed him in his *Troubles*, and was not ashamed of his *Chain*, 2 Tim. 1. 16, 17.

IN these two Instances we see the Duty both of those that *minister* in sacred things, and those who *attend* on their Ministry : the One to *stand up* for Truth and Purity ; and the Other to strengthen and *stand by* them in so doing. It should indeed be so far from Discouraging either one or t'other to have a *multitude of Opposers*, that it should rather animate and invigorate them.

I wish those whom God has bless'd with many useful and valuable Talents, would think it their Duty to employ these as the *present State* of Religion, and the *Occasions* of the Church do more especially require. If *some* Men were but as *ready* and *willing* as all about them have conceived an Opinion they are *able*, to Plead the Cause of those who are *now every where spoken against*, tho' it should not *stem* the Tide, yet surely it might prevent many Persons being *carry'd away* with it.

WE see others that can unite in *nothing else*, yet agree in bearing hard upon the *Dissenters* ; whilst one contributes his share of *Learning*, another of *Wit*, and some who have little of either, contribute a large share of *Malice* to censure and expose them : and do's not this call for the exerting of those *several Talents* which might be of Service in a *just Defence* ? Perhaps some may answer No, the Temper of the World is such, that Men will not *Read*, nor *Hear*, much less *consider* what we have to say for our selves. It may be so ; but the *Time may come*, when there will be a Disposition to enquire *who appeared* in this and the other matter ; and, when Men would be glad to know what was *offered* on such *Occasions*. But 'tis still urg'd, there is no *hope of any Success* : that is, if we fix our Hope upon our *selves*, or our own *Endeavours* ; but shall any think it a sufficient Reason for *neglecting*, that he must not *trust to*, his best Endeavours ? What knows any Man how far God may own even the *weakest* and most *unlikely* Attempts to bring about the *greatest Ends* and Designs ? Nay, let the *Event* be what it will, that is not *my Concern*, but *God's* ; I ought to be found in the way of my Duty, whatever may be the Consequence ; And He that takes Pains in a *good Cause*, whether he succeed or no at present, yet shall not *lose his Reward* at last.

IT may again be Pleaded, that if God had any thing to do at such a time, and for such Persons, he would *raise up Instruments* to accomplish his Purposes and Designs. In answer to which I would ask whether it *has* not really been so, that God *has raised up* and animated *some* to appear for us ? But they have been censur'd and discourag'd even by *those* that should have *back'd* their Endeavours, and *blessed God for them*. And have there not been *others* who have stood *ready* for any Occasion of Service, were it

not for that intolerable Humour of carping and finding fault with every thing that is done? Either thro' a *forward Ignorance*, or a little *Nicety* and *Curiosity* of Temper, or an *over-acted Caution*, and Pretence to *Superiour Prudence*, we may observe some People *condemning every Attempt* of a publick Nature, when at the same time they are as little fit to be Judges as they are to be Actors in such Affairs: Tho' I think it would be much more excusable to put themselves forward in *Doing* all they can, than to assume the Office of *sitting in Judgment* upon all that is done.

BUT to proceed, there are *another Set* of Persons, who for a time have profest themselves in our Interest, that yet after a while, and when we have *most* stood in need of their *owning* and *assisting* us, have *withdrawn* themselves from us. I wish the first Motives, and *chief* Inducements of such may be able to stand a *future Trial*. Tho', I believe without breach of Charity, it may be suspected that *some* of those Gentlemen have more to answer for, than they are willing to think at present, upon any thing we can say. So that from the whole, it seems highly requisite to press such a Duty as this, namely, that Men ought to stand up for those who are spoken against for Conscience-sake.

AND this I would beg leave particularly to urge with reference to such as are now requir'd either to quit their *Places* in the *Government*, or to desert our *Religious Assemblies*. These Persons have a noble *Opportunity* of showing their *Regard* to a Party, despised for the sake of a *good Conscience*. And that it is their *Duty* to quit their *Offices* and adhere to our *Public Assemblies*, has been abundantly prov'd *. What I would offer upon this Head, is only to put them in mind of the *Behaviour*, and *Conduct* of the *Ministers* in former times, when this was *their Case*. With all due respect to the *Service* and *Usefulness* of those that are in *higher Posts*, and with a just Concern for the *Necessities* of those who may be in *lower ones*; I would insist upon this, as a *Direction* to *Both*. 'Tis well known that when this Trial came upon our *Ministers*, they did not stand objecting the *Necessities* of their *Families*; they could trust them with a *Good Providence*: nor did they stand arguing what might be the *Consequence*, if Men of *contrary Principles* and *Temper*s should fill up *their Places*: but committing themselves and theirs to an *All-wise God*, they presently Resolv'd rather to lose their greatest *Benefices* and *Posts* of *Service*, than to decline from their *Principles*. Now the Trial comes not so much upon the *Ministers*, as upon the *Leading Professors* amongst the *Dissenters*: I heartily wish that the *Examples* of

* See Dr. Williams's Enquiry into the present Duty of Protestant Dissenters.

Those in a former Age, might engage These in the present Age, to bear the same open and public Testimony, to the same Principles: I mean as far as the same things yet remain in Dispute amongst us.

I need not tell such as are in the most Eminent Stations, that for them to act *frankly* and *sincerely* in this matter, will be to procure double Honour; and will be of the most signal Service, not only to the *Dissenters*, but to Religion, and the Cause of Conscience it self; as it will prove the *Reality* of these against all the Profaneness of the Atheist, and the Worldling.

AND for those whose very Maintenance and Subsistence depends upon what they now do, it would methinks have a considerable Influence upon the common Part of the World to let it be seen, that they have something nearer their Hearts, and more in their Thoughts than what they shall eat, or what they shall drink, or wherewithal they shall be clothed; even the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness, Matth. 6. 31, 33. O for such a Spirit as that of the three Children, or rather the three Champions, in the *Prophesie*, that should enable Men to say, if you will allow the Allusion, God is able to deliver us from extreme Want and Poverty; and if he see it good for us he will deliver us; but if not, we will not cease to serve him according to our Consciences, and as we have been wont to do.

4. IT is certainly the Duty of every Man of Piety and Conscience, with great Steadfastness and Constancy, to act up to his Sense of things. You will observe through the whole of this Discourse, that I have taken it for granted, in what has been said with reference to the *Dissenters*, that those who profess themselves such, do it for Conscience sake: And this I am sure ought to be *steadfastly* adhered to.

THERE is a Text in *Micah*, which I had no sooner thought of, but I was ready to wish for time to begin a fresh Discourse; as it may suggest a many things very suitable to our present Subject: I shall however content my self with a transient Accommodation of it: Chap. 4. ver 5. For all People will walk, every one in the Name of his God; and we will walk in the Name of the Lord our God for ever, and ever. This intimates to us, that all People have some Notions of a Deity, and the Worship which is due to him; as also, that whatever they embrace and fall in with, under that Notion, tho' never so Idolatrous and Superstitious, they are generally very Resolute in it; Every one will walk in the Name of his God. We therefore much more, as if the Prophet had said, who have the true God, and the only God to be ours, should Re-

solve, *that we will walk in the Name of the Lord our God for ever, and ever.* Hence it is, that when the People of Israel are said to have *Changed their Glory*, that is, their God, and their *Worship*; it is ask'd with Wonder, *Hath a Nation changed their Gods, which yet are no Gods?* Tho' many worship vain and imaginary Deities, and such as are no Gods, yet has it been known that they have changed them? And upon the *Israelites* having acted at so foolish a rate, 'tis presently added, *Be astonished O ye Heavens at this, and be ye horribly afraid,* Jer. 2. 11.

Now, what was the manner of People in *these times*, when they worship'd *different Gods*, has still continued to be the manner of the World where they have worship'd in different ways; tho' they have own'd one and the *same God*. Every one is for walking in *that way* which he has fix'd upon, and of which he has entertained the greatest Opinion, *whatever* it be that first determin'd, and engag'd him. Some are led purely by *Education*, Others are govern'd very powerfully by *Interest*, and Many are sway'd by meer *Humour*, and the Friendship or Conversation of *agreeable Companions*; Yet each of these we see very warm, and zealous for the Way they have fall'n into. And shall not those, who have been wrought upon, by a *Spirit of Regeneration*; and who by *strong inward Convictions* of their Duty and Happiness, have been fixed for God and Heaven, much more take up a Resolution, that, *where they have thus met with God*, they will *continue to walk with him as long as they live*? I should never entertain a hard Thought of any, that, upon such a Principle, stood up for this or the other Church, and Society of Christians; only I must plead the Reasonableness that the same Allowance should be made by Them to Others.

THIS, I am perswaded, is the Case of *many* of the *Dissenters*, and that which has rendred their *Way of Worship* very desirable and valuable to them. But if besides this, they set themselves seriously to consider things, (according to our *first Admonition*) and thereupon apprehend that the *Way* they have *chosen* is most agreeable to *Scripture*, and the *Rule* which *Christ* has given us, they ought to abide by it, in the *Jewish* Phrase, *for ever and ever*, or, in other Words, from Generation to Generation.

THE grand Point, which the *Dissenters* are contending for, is this, that nothing be insisted on, as a *Term of Communion*, but what our *Blessed Lord* has required, and laid down, as such, in the *Received Canon of Scripture*. And whilst we thus stand up for the *Original Plan* of our Religion, and the *first pure* unmixt Institutions of it, we think we may look upon our selves as

walking

walking in the Name of the Lord our God; and that, in this way of doing so, we ought to Persevere. This we apprehend to be the only means of enlarging the Foundations of the Church, so as to take in All, who sincerely Believe and Obey the Gospel; and at the same time securing the Sacred Inclosure, so as to keep out All, who are Disobedient and Unbelievers. 'Till Matters be reduc'd to this Standard, we have no Hope of ever seeing those happy Times, which the Prophet Micah speaks of, when God should so Gloriously appear in the midst of them that did Resolve to walk in his Name,

AND if this be really the Way to such Blessings, it should not only encourage us to maintain our Sentiments, but should engage others to come into them. How desirable a thing must it be, to see such a Prophecy fulfill'd? It shall come to pass in the last Days, that the Mountain of the House of the LORD shall be established in the Top of the Mountains, and it shall be exalted above the Hills, and People shall flow unto it. And many Nations shall come and say, Come and let us go up to the Mountain of the LORD, and to the House of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths for the Law shall go forth of Zion, and the Word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many People, and rebuke strong Nations afar off, and they shall beat their Swords into Plowshares, and their Spears into Pruning-hooks: Nation shall not lift up a Sword against Nation, neither shall they learn War any more. But they shall sit every Man under his Vine, and under his Fig-tree, and none shall make them afraid: for the Mouth of the LORD of Hosts hath spoken it, Micah 4. begin. Now, as far as we think the Principles we adhere to do promise such a State of things, 'tis fit we should be concerned about them, and firmly resolv'd to persist in them.

NOR should it be thought sufficient privately to entertain such Opinions; but, as Men are called to it, and as they have Opportunity, they ought to give a publick Testimony of their receiving and avowing them: especially when the Consequences of their doing so, are like to be great and considerable. I am satisfied that if all who agree with the Dissenters in the Point above-mentioned would think it their Duty to appear with them in Declaring so much, it would more tend to promote true Piety, and, at last, a good Understanding, amongst us, than for any to lie under the Suspicion of what they care not to own. However, I would hope, that such as have hitherto continued with us, will not shrink under the present Tryal of their Constancy and Integrity. God has many times own'd in a very signal manner an Open and

Adventi-

Adventurous Piety, when those who have been contriving *little Shifts and Expedients*, have prov'd really *Sufferers*, by those means from which they promis'd themselves *Peace and Security*.

HOW far was *Daniel* transported beyond all the *Arguings of Flesh and Blood*, and the *Common Measures of Humane Prudence*, when he persisted not only in the *Worship of God*, but in *such a particular manner of Worship*, as he knew would expose him, and prove an *Occasion* of his being thrown into the *Den of Lions*? He knew an *irrevocable Decree* was signed, he knew how much depended upon his being prov'd an *Offender*; and yet with an amazing *Greatness of Mind* he goes on *just as he us'd to do*, as openly and undisturb'd as if he knew there had been no *Danger* at all in what he did. That one Verse, *Dan. 6. 10.* gives a very noble and most affecting *Proof of a Brave and Steady Conduct* in *Matters of Religion*, *Now when Daniel knew that the Writing was signed, he went into his House, and his Windows being open in his Chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his Knees Three times a Day, and Prayed, and gave Thanks before his God AS HE DID AFORE-TIME.* What I would lay the *Stress* upon here, is the last *Expression*, *He prayed and gave Thanks as he, did afore-time.* We will readily grant, that he was obliged, at all *Hazards*, to worship the *True God*, in *Opposition* to all *Idolatrous Decrees*; and that he was obliged *when* he worshipped to *look toward Jerusalem*, according to that known *Place*, *1 Kings 8.* But was there any *Necessity* that he should *kneel at his Window*, so as to be *seen or heard there*?

'TIS plain that *Darius the King* had such an *Opinion of Daniel*, and such a very great *Affection* for him, that no *Suspitions* against him would have taken *Effect*: for even when a *Number of his Enemies* had *assembled*, and *found him making Supplication*, so as that they were able to give in the *fullest Evidence* of the *Fact*; yet the *King* was *sore displeased with himself* for making such a *Decree*, and *set his Heart on Daniel to deliver him*, and *labour'd to do it till the going down of the Sun*, *ver. 14.* Now as he was thus *secure* against any *Suspitions*, and even against some *Degrees of Evidence*, might not *Daniel* have been *true* to his *Religion*, and yet have kept himself out of *Danger*? Would not *Common Prudence*, as some speak, have suggested, that he might retire at *different Hours*, and might have prayed at such a *Distance* from his *Window*, and in so *soft* a manner, as not to be *discovered or over-heard*? Especially since it was but for *Thirty Days* that he was to be under this *Confinement*: and considering withal how

much depended upon his acting Cautiously, and under Covert, at that Juncture: when not only his own Preferments and his very Life lay at Stake; but in all probability the Jewish Nation must suffer under the dreadful Consequences of his being cut off. Yea, the Peace and Prosperity of the whole State seem'd in a great measure to depend upon this Daniel; of whom it is said, when he was prefer'd above the Presidents and Princes, that such an excellent Spirit was in him, the King thought to set him over the whole Realm. And yet all this laid together did not alter his Behaviour one jot, or make him vary in one Circumstance; but as he continued to worship his God, so he did it in the same way and manner as he did afore-time; that is, just as he would have done, if such a Decree had never been made. Such an Example as this should not be look'd upon only as what is worthy to be Admired, but as fit to be Imitated.

BUT I see I must conclude; and that I shall do by leaving with you these following Inferences; which may also be look'd upon as further Directions to us, in our Conduct and Behaviour, under such a Circumstance as that in our Text.

SINCE this is indeed our Case to be every where spoken against, this should make us every where watchful over our selves, that we give no just Occasion to any to speak Evil of us. Take Care that nothing be brought against us, but in the Matters of our God; that we suffer not as Evil Doers in any respect, but only for the sake of a Good Conscience, and then happy are we.

AGAIN, Our being every where spoken against by Men, should make us more concerned to secure the Favour of God, and to approve our selves to him; and that will be instead of the Smiles of Princes, and better than all the Honours and Enjoyments of the World. Let us remember and seriously think of this, that to make a stricter Profession than others, is but to render our selves the more unhappy and miserable at last, if our Hearts are not right with God. We had need look to it that we be very sincere in what we do: or else whilst we are reproached by Those about us for making such a Profession, we are sure to be abhorr'd and rejected of God, because we have no more than a Profession.

FURTHER, Our being commonly spoken against, should be an Occasion of increasing brotherly Love: It should fix a more hearty and lasting Affection for one another; that the more others are provok'd to Strife and Ill Actions, the more we may be provok'd to Love and Good Works.

FINALLY

FINALLY, Your being *spoken against* should not excite any *undue Resentments* or *Behaviour* toward those that treat you in such a manner. But think of our blessed Master, who when he was *Reviled*, *Reviled not again*; and always keep in Mind that Exhortation, *Be not overcome of Evil, but overcome Evil with Good.*

WHICH God grant we may be enabled to do.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

PAGE 4. Line 26. read *heated*. p. 7. l. 7. r. *Apostles*.

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